

Middle School Initiative

**PART I
COVER SHEET**

CAP 4 SEMESTER 1 WEEK 17

COURSE: Public Affairs Officer Leadership Laboratory, Achievement 11

LESSON TITLE: Conflict Management

LENGTH OF LESSON: 50 Minutes

METHOD: Informal Lecture - Discussion

REFERENCE(S): *Leadership: 2000 and Beyond*, Volume II, Chapter 10

AUDIO/VISUAL AIDS/HANDOUTS/ACTIVITY MATERIAL(S): None

COGNITIVE OBJECTIVE: The objective of this lesson is for each cadet to understand the processes of conflict management.

COGNITIVE SAMPLES OF BEHAVIOR: Each cadet should become aware of what the processes of conflict management are and how to apply them.

AFFECTIVE OBJECTIVE: N/A

AFFECTIVE SAMPLES OF BEHAVIOR: N/A

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PART II TEACHING PLAN

Introduction

ATTENTION: Much of our lifetime is filled with some sort of conflict. I can only say that each of you has had a conflicting issue stare you in the face today that you either resolved or shoved aside. Today we will look at how you handled that conflict and if you used the processes that will be discussed this period.

MOTIVATION: *"The best executive is the one who has sense enough to pick good men to do what he wants done, and self-restraint enough to keep from meddling with them while they do it."*

- Theodore Roosevelt
26th President of the United States

TRANSITION: Are we ready to resolve all of the worldly conflicts?

Body

MP 1 We are now entering into an area of leadership that takes a lot of reasoning power - that of conflict management. Along with that reasoning power is your age level and maturity. Can you, as a ninth grader, really consider yourself as anywhere near being an expert in the resolution of individual conflicts? Personally, I would say no, but that gives us a starting point.

How much tension has there been in your life? What kind of resentment have you undergone over the past several years? Have you just quietly stewed about something, mouthed off at someone, or gotten so up tight that you have had the urge to hit the offending party. How have you handled these situations?

NOTE: These questions might elicit an answer from some of the cadets. Handle each answer with the utmost of tact, so as not to offend the individual and further the frustration.

In this period we are going to look at three conflict situations, the methods of handling them, and effective resolution; methods of handling conflict; and setting up effective conflict resolution.

Conflict Situations

Win-Win Situations. In this type of conflict situation we focus on ends or goals. Here we must identify the sources of conflict so they may be presented as a problem to be solved. We must establish extremely high goals; much greater than the norm. This is a goal that all personnel wish to achieve with a minimum of conflict. All share an aim that cuts across any internal conflicts and cannot happen without complete cooperation. If your mission is to find a lost

person, then all personal conflicts must be set aside in order to achieve the established goal. This is definitely a starting point in the conflict management system - find that missing person.

Win-Lose Situations. Here you are, a cadet second lieutenant. What kind of "power" do you have over lesser ranking cadets? (**Watch for some answers here.**) If you say, "Do as I tell you because I am your boss," you are depending on implied power bestowed upon you by the unit. This power supposedly lets you reward or punish those subordinate to you. Here is a situation in which you may use your power to force compliance with your desires even though the outcome may be wrong. You win this round because if your subordinates disagree with you, you have the power to punish them with dismissal from their positions in the cadet structure, or have them stand in the corner. You have not seen the other side of the problem.

Lose-Lose Situations. Here we both lose something. Neither of us gets what we want completely. We have gotten something of what we desired, but then we really didn't have a confrontation. This attitude indicates that gaining something is better than nothing.

What is a side payment? In the civilian work-a-day world, this could be an additional payment for doing some sort of dirty work that some people just will not touch. For instance, many jobs have a night differential in the pay scale to entice workers to take these night shifts. This enticement costs the company money and the worker's biological clock is thrown out of kilter. The company gains some productivity and the worker gains a little extra pocket change.

What about mediation? You and another person of equal grade cannot resolve your conflict, so you ask someone higher in authority to resolve the conflict. You avoid confrontation and problem solving by "passing the buck" to a superior hoping that he can solve it for you.

These methods of conflict resolution have several things in common:

- There is a clear *me-you* distinction between the adversaries, rather than *us-versus-the-problem* orientation.
- Your energies are directed towards the other person in an atmosphere of totally losing or winning.
- The adversaries see only the issue from their point of view, rather than defining the problem in terms of mutual needs.
- Each of the adversaries emphasizes in getting a solution, rather than defining goals, values or motives.
- Things are taken too personally by the adversaries, rather than remaining objective in the conflict, missing many facts and issues on which to focus.
- The adversaries are conflict-oriented, emphasizing their immediate disagreement, rather than being relationship-oriented which emphasizes the long-term effect of their differences and how to resolve them.

TRANSITION: Having just looked at some conflict situations, let's move on to conflict handling methods.

Methods of Handling Conflict

The method by which you handle conflict is dependent on your leadership and management style, the maturity of the conflict, and the limits of the situation. We have five general approaches that may be used in conflict management. Each method has its strengths and weaknesses.

Suppression and Smoothing. In this method of conflict resolution, we find that this technique has two processes. Two people are at odds with one another about something; differences of opinion that the manager will attempt to suppress. By suppressing these differences, the manager can play on the similarities in the conflict in order to seek out common points of agreement. Although this method will last for a short period of time, the differences will come up again.

Denial. In this method of handling a conflicting issue, you the leader and manager deny that it actually exists at all. We might refer to this method as maximum suppression. Again, this tool might be useful for a short period of time, but the conflict will rear itself up again and possibly become worse and totally unmanageable. This method appears to be a very bad tool.

Use of power. The majority rules. You've heard that statement before, I'm sure. If you refer to "the system," you are saying that the majority had agreed to something in the past and this is the way it will be done regardless of your feelings on the matter. We use this one all the time, don't we?

Compromise. In a compromise we see this as a way of helping others resolve their differences. In a compromise situation both sides give up a little, but then in the end each comes out a relative winner. We have set down at the bargaining table and have come to a solution that all parties can live with, or can they? In striking a bargain we can generate new conflicts that will consume more time and energy.

Confrontation or Integration. This method brings the opposing forces together so that they may present their viewpoints in the hopes that that this will reduce their differences. The assumption here is that group dynamics will come into play and the group effort will exceed the total of the individuals' contributions. This method is difficult and with careful management it should not create any new problems.

Establishing Effective Conflict Resolution

Management in which all the members participate is part of the win-win approach. This type of management depends on gaining everyone's agreement and commitment to stated objectives. When this method is used, you, the supervisor, are telling the others that they need a solution that will meet each other's goals, in a mutually acceptable way they still want to control. To manage conflict effectively, set each other's goals down in black and white. Attempt to integrate these goals and come up with an acceptable statement of the goals, or show the obstacles that face both sides in achieving these goals. Each side may have different goals, but each other must accept

them in order to work. The conflict can be considered solved when each party of the conflict reaches a solution that is acceptable to the other. To facilitate a mutually acceptable statement of a problem you should use the following steps:

- Analyze the problem to identify the issues.
- Avoid stating the goals as personal priorities.
- State the problem as a goal or as an obstacle to the goal rather than as a solution.
- Identify the obstacles that are in your way.
- Depersonalize the problem. It is not just you against the problem, but all against it.
- Identifying the problem, brainstorming the possible solutions, and evaluating the solutions should be separate processes from each other. Sounds familiar doesn't it?

MP 2 As you can see, conflict management and problem solving are interrelated. Either way, the processes appear to be very much the same. As you grow in maturity, you will be using all of the processes to solve various problems that confront you. Your success may depend on how well you apply what you have learned.

Conclusion

SUMMARY: Today, we have discussed the various methods of conflict management. You have looked at conflicting situations and how to ultimately resolve them. This is an ever-continuing learning process and only time will tell how effective you really are.

REMOTIVATION: Being a good subordinate is part of being a leader. Everyone is part of a team, and all members have responsibilities that go with belonging to that team. Conflict resolution is a team effort.

CLOSURE: In closing today, I ask that you read the portion of this achievement chapter that deals with the subject of conflict management so that you will have better knowledge of the subject. Make sure that you answer the appropriate questions in your text relating to this class. The review exercises act as a reinforcement tool, bring out the highlights on each subject area. Class is dismissed.

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**PART III
LESSON REVIEW**

LESSON OBJECTIVE(S): The purpose of this lesson was to acquaint the cadets with the processes of conflict management.

LESSON QUESTIONS: Completion of the chapter review exercise questions relating to this class satisfies this requirement.